



Scene at Mill Pool during work at King's Mill 1929

Cambridge RIVER CAM Chronicle by Mike Petty

c.46.5

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1887

Summerhouse and walled garden, known as Hodson's Garden were built in 1887 by wealthy local resident John Hodson so that he could keep a watchful eye on his daughters bathing in the river and oversee a fish hatchery he had constructed nearby. The land it was on was common land which he had annexed and the borough council tried to remove him but failed.
– CEN 20.8.2005; photo 71156/55

1895

main sewage scheme in full flow involving deep sewers & new pumping station at Cheddar's Lane, streets choked by work, much grumbling [1.2,1.19]

1897

Discover new sewage scheme inadequate & needs vertical shafts at great additional expense (ratepayers protest at costs and throw out proposals to rebuild Guildhall) [1.3]

1897 04 22

A resident in Cambridge has suggested that a new feature in the water carnival which is to be part of the celebration of her Majesty's Great Jubilee in Cambridge, a grand naval engagement should be fought on the river Cam. The engagement might include the explosion of mines, the firing of guns from ironclads and torpedo boats, and at dusk the illumination of the whole fleet and the use of search lights. Such an affair would undoubtedly attract many sightseers and the illumination of the fleet should prove very effective

1897 10 27

Sir, - On Wednesday morning my attention was called to the state of the River Cam near Baitsbite Sluice. The water was covered with an oily matter and the stench arising therefrom was beastly. The whole atmosphere was apparently impregnated with some vapour. The havoc amongst the fish was appalling. Thousands upon thousands - I might say tons - of pike, eels, roach and dace were dead and dying, struggling to liberate themselves from their putrid, poisonous liquid. I never witness such a lamentable sight before - Thomas Banyard

1898 07 11

Sir - As a visitor to Cambridge I was induced last weekend to take a trip on the Cam. I shall not soon forget it. My adviser took particular care to impress me with the fact that Cambridge had been granted a new method of sewage disposal, and on that account I should not inhale such odours as at one time were the characteristic feature of the river trip. But to my disgust, I found another evil had arisen. The river was strewn with dead dogs and cats. Between Walnut Tree Lane and Baitsbite I counted no less than a dozen of such corpses, not always by the bank side, but floating in the middle of the river – Tourist CDN 1898 07 11

1900

1901 11 16

Last September the people of Cambridge held a gala day for the lifeboat's sake. There was a picturesque procession through the streets, the launching of a lifeboat in the River Cam, with fireworks and music in the evening. Now we read of the incident at Caister, when men went out into the raging sea, not only to risk, but actually to give up their lives in an effort to save others. "Caister men never turn back", said the old lifeboat man who gave evidence at the inquest & Cambridge will rally to the assistance of the women and children whose husbands and fathers have sealed with their lives their devotion to the lifeboat cause.

1903 04 17

On Thursday 23rd April a novel sight will be witnessed at Strange's Boat House, when Mr Tom Barton, the popular and world-renowned Log Roller, of Canada, will give his unique display of rolling a log of Bovril tins on the river. He will give £5 to anyone who will get on and stand on the log for three minutes. From the boat house Mr Barton, who is champion of the world in this particular line, will proceed through the locks and down the river for a mile or two.

1903 04 24

Tom Barton, the world's champion log roller provided entertainment for several thousands on the banks of the Cam. He made a journey from the University boathouse, through Jesus Lock to Strange's boathouse on a cylinder composed of Bovril tins soldered together, nine feet long and one foot in diameter, without so much as wetting his feet. A chair was passed to him, then a light table and placed thereon a large bottle supposed to contain Bovril. It looked so easy that the challenge to any person to stand on the cylinder for two minutes and win £5 was irresistible. A man assayed the feat but did not remain for two seconds and was precipitated into the water. 03 04 24

1903 10 12

There was another heavy downpour of rain; the Cam has but in a few places overflowed its banks and the ferries between Cambridge and Chesterton are still working. The Granta has not behaved so well and the water is already over the banks; there is a vast expanse of water with the tops of the hedges and the trees only showing. At Grantchester mill the road is knee deep. The basement of houses in Newmarket High Street are flooded as are some of the low-lying streets at Saffron Walden and the railway line at Chesterford is threatened with being submerged. 03 10 21

1903 10 16

An aquatic entertainment of a unique kind was given on the Cam by Leonard F. Durell. It consisted of a genuine exhibition of log rolling. The log, not very large, was painted red, white and blue. He jumped lightly on it, spun it into mid stream, then sat down and, using a long pole, commenced his journey. Along the Banks of the Colleges he performed various revolutions and arrived at his destination without mishap. There his feats were little short of marvellous; he stood on his head on a chair resting on the log and was heartily applauded. 03 10 16

1903 11 30

The unprecedented rainfall has taxed waterways beyond their capacity and floods are the natural consequence. In Cambridge boathouses have been invaded by the flood and the ferries have stopped plying. The flood has taken possession of Sheep's Green and part of Coe Fen while the Upper Granta has inundated many acres of pasture. In the fen country the dykes are full to overflowing and the land clogged with water, while in St Ives there are floods to a considerable depth covering hundreds of acres. 03 11 30

1906 04 09

A fatality occurred at the portion of the river known as Paradise; two nurses from Addenbrooke's Hospital hired a Canadian canoe but it overturned and they were precipitated into the water. One clung to the boat and with the aid of a pair of horse reins was brought to the bank. A man pluckily jumped into the river after the other nurse but the depth of the water – about 15 feet – made it impossible for him to reach her. Eventually the clothing of the unfortunate lady was hooked but she had obviously succumbed. 06 04 09d

1906 10 04

An extraordinary sight, which ought never to occur again, is to be witnessed at Baitsbite Lock. For a hundred yards the surface of the water is literally covered with dead and dying fish – pike, roach, bream, dace and a host of smaller fry. Fishermen would never have dreamed there were as many fish in the waters. They have been slaughtered by the introduction of some noxious substance into the river. 06 10 04 & a

1906 10 19

The Conservators of the River Cam say steam and motor boats travelling at considerable speed draw after them a large quantity of water which render the shallower parts of the river bare with the result that boats were grounded. The swell could also capsize small craft or throw them up high and dry. A new byelaw was needed. 06 10 19a

1908 06 12

At the bottom of Mill Lane there was a kind of wharf with steps to allow people to get down to the river. Recently Mr Scudamore had fastened a sort of wooden punt as a mooring for pleasure boats, now nobody in a boat could get to the steps without trespassing on it. But no loading of boats had been carried on for nine years, the water was only a foot deep and there had been no complaints. Anybody in a punt could use it, Scudamore claimed. However as the river was a navigable highway, this was an obstruction magistrates decided and fined him five shillings CWN 08 06 12 p2

1909

River Cam dredging most beneficial [2.1]

1909 08 13

A petrol-driven motor boat owned by Mr John Scudamore, boat-builder of Mill Lane, and occupied by a party of five undergraduates caught fire when at the back of King's College and was burnt down to the water's edge. They had experienced difficulties with the 3½ horse-power engine and Mr Scudamore went to their assistance. He was examining it when it burst

into flame. The cause is a mystery: nobody was smoking, the engine-bearings were not overheated and there was no escape of petrol. CWN 09 08 13

1910

1911

River Cam fish poisoned possible by sewerage [4.2]

1911

Public bathing station in river, what hope for public baths, plan shows how Kings Mill might be converted for open air swimming bath [3.5]

1911 06 02

A serious rival to sailing on the river Cam has now to be reckoned with. This is 'botoring' which to the uninitiated stands for motor boating. There are today about 80 of this type of craft of various sizes and power. Now owners have formed the Cambridge Motor Boat Club to work with other river users to make the waterways even more safe and pleasant. Already membership has reached 35 which is proof of the popularity of the sport 11 06 02a

1912 03 29

Today the population of the Borough of Cambridge is 40,560. On Monday it will be 57,073. The extension of the boundary now brings in Chesterton and the urban portions of Trumpington, Cherry Hinton and Grantchester. These suburbs were inhabited almost entirely by people whose living lay in Cambridge but were separated from it by the River Cam or purely artificial borders. It means that the residents will now be under the care of the Cambridge Town Council. 12 03 29c

1913 01 24

Cambridge University Boat Club discussed Captain Gibbon's scheme for the improvement of the river Cam. It suggests the river be made 75 feet all over, that banks be protected with concrete sheeting and the depth increased to seven feet in the centre. . The total costs, including improvement to Grassy Corner is £25,000 Improvement Scheme – widen and deepen & p10

1913 02 07

Cam Conservators - damage to banks by motor boats, Queens' walls undermined, Jesus Lock Bridge dangerous

1913 03 07

Cam Conservators – Navigation Act obsolete

1913 03 28

Cambridge Corporation should take full control of the river and its landing stages and wharfs. But some people did not care twopence about the Corporation and would stick to what they'd got. One house boat was drawn up beside the steps and filled with men sent there by the boat proprietor to defend his position if necessary. This was a humiliating position for the council. It meant that the biggest bully won, the man of most bodily strength would oust his neighbours. 13 03 28 p9

1913 05 09

Cam Conservators consider new Act, motor boats, not to load vessels more than 3ft 9in and have white load-line drawn 13 05 09

1913 05 30

Two undergraduates told the court they were coming up the Cam in light sculling boats when they met a tug towing a string of six barges belonging to Colchester and Ball of Burwell. The barges smashed their boat and threw them in the river. The bargee said the wind had blown the rear barges across the river and the scull had got nipped between them and the bank, despite attempts by two men with poles to avoid the accident. But a Met Office witness testified there had been little wind that day. The judge said were too many barges in the chain and the back ones would always swing. He spoke from personal experience as an old oarsman on the Cam 13 05 30 p10 CIP

1913 08 30

Granta belongs Canon Pemberton, Squire of Trumpington; court case 50 years ago, & annually puts chain across river; banks on his side used for picnicking [1.2]

1913 11 07

River Cam Sailing Club – improvements needed re sewage, weeds, as vehicle of traffic 13 11 07 p5 CIP

1913 11 21

River Cam dredged from Jesus Sluice to above Railway Bridge; to continue to Long Reach 13 11 21 p7 CIP

1914 01 16

Cam Conservators investments reviewed – 14 01 16b

1914 02 13

Lighters owned by West Norfolk Manure and Chemical Co had touched the lower sill at Baits Bite Lock. They were carrying about 42 tons but if this was reduced it would not be economical and they would abandon the river and take the materials by rail. The sills could not be lowered without putting in new doors. The uprights are practically decayed and the two ploughs are never used except in emergency. The keeper was fearful of opening the doors and if there were a flood the whole might go. Urgent repairs were needed, the Conservators heard – 14 02 13d

1914 03 20

There is a great need for a footbridge across the Cam near Snob's Point, a meeting heard. It would open up one of the finest rambles and be the nearest route to the railway station. But it would interfere with the ladies' bathing place; there would be such publicity they would have to shift it. And they already had one footbridge and if they wanted the area developed they must have a road bridge 14 03 20b

1914 05 08

The Cam Conservators had written to the West Norfolk Chemical Company concerning damage done to the sills at the locks by their barges, owing to their bumping when heavy laden. The Company replied that if they lightened their barges to such an extent that they no longer bumped, it would become cheaper for them to transfer the residuals from the gasworks by rail, which would ruin the traffic on the Cam. They could not lighten the tugs, which were heavier than the barges. The barge Charles, which has been running on the Cam for more than 50 years, drew two inches more water than the present barges 14 05 08, b c

1914 05 08

The Cam Conservators were told that if they relaid the floor of Jesus Green Bridge in reinforced concrete, the council would pay half the cost. It had been put up to replace an old wooden bridge. There was formerly a lock and weir at Fort St George, and a bridge there. When the lock was moved to Jesus Green the liability attached to the old bridge was moved

on to the new bridge. There was a public right of way over the bridge and the Conservators thought it more convenient to build an iron bridge 14 05 08

1914 05 08

State of Baitsbite lock – 14 05 08c

1914 06 12

Cam improvements discussed, Pike & Eel to first post, dredging shoals & rounding sharp corners, especially Grassy 1914 06 12 p3

1914 07

At Wicken Henry Houghton spotted something floating in the river. It was a body wrapped up in a white blanket, nightgown and man's coat. He had not seen it earlier but passing barges may have moved it or it could have floated down the river for miles. The baby girl had been born alive and had lived a month. There was nothing to show whether it died a natural death or was murdered. It was the third time in a month that the body of a young baby has been found in the Cam.

1914 10 23

Under the 1912 boundary extension proposals Cambridge had to erect a bridge over the Cam to Chesterton within five years. Walnut Tree Avenue was the best site but whether this was the best time was a matter of debate. An Inspector from London had told them what they had to do and it was now the Law of the Land. Chesterton people had voted against it - in fact nobody wanted it. The only way to overturn the order was by going through all the expense of obtaining another Act of Parliament

1914 11 20

GER new railway – act to be sought; includes line crossing River Cam near Sawston, stopping up stream, Ely land

1914 11 20

There is no more potent cause of disease amongst soldiers than impure water. When Cambridge became a mobilisation centre and the Sixth Division was camped along the Cam from Jesus Lock to the Pike & Eel, Sims Woodhouse, the Prof of Pathology, took a bucketful of river water, from a spot where the soldiers were bathing and washing their clothes and by experiment turned it into perfectly pure and palatable drinking water. Even water polluted by corpses is made innocuous. It will be surprising if the whole army does not benefit by his research 14 11 20

1914 11 27

Cam Sailing Club a/m

1914 12 04

The proposed Military Road Bridge across the Cam should cross at right angle, otherwise it might hold up the water, South Level Commissioners say. But that might cause the abandonment of the whole scheme. There was also the question of the level crossing

1914 12 11

Scout Langley rescues soldier Cam

1915 01 29

Cambridge Floods. A heavy downpour of rain experienced last week caused the River Cam to overflow its banks, and the low lands adjoining the river were extensively flooded. At Grantchester the road from the mill to Trumpington was submerged for a distance of about 400 yards on Friday and Saturday, the road being impassable except in a vehicle. The water

rose very rapidly on Friday, Sheep's Green, Newnham and Coe Fen became impassable, whilst Chesterton Meadows became inundated the water encroaching halfway across the roadway at Water Street, Old Chesterton. The ferries below Victoria Bridge were unable to be worked during the weekend, but were able to resume on Monday. Although the commons were not flooded to anything like the extent they were following the blizzard towards the end of last month, large pools of water existed at places. At Jesus Sluice there was only a difference of about a foot between the levels of the water above and below the locks. The river has now gone down, and is almost at its normal level 15 01 29 CIPof

1915 04 16

Hundreds of soldiers have enjoyed spell of boating on Cam, during fine weather – photo – 15 04 16b

1915 05 07

River Fatality.—A sad fatality occurred at Cambridge on Wednesday afternoon, when a little boy named Douglas William Ward, aged 4, son of Police Constable William Ward, 29, Beche Road, Cambridge, was drowned in the River Cam. It appears that the little chap was playing near the bottom of Priory Road with a younger child named Flack, aged about 2½ years. Just how he came to get into the water nobody knows, but it is thought he must have descended the steps leading to the water and fell in.

1916 07 01

half sewage passed into river untreated, resignations from committee; due lack of care when laid pipes crack & water gets in from soil, but has transformed Cambridge from damp place to dry & healthy - few years ago impossible to dig down 7 feet without hitting water, now 20 feet, mists stopped [2.2]

1916 07 29

Flooded state sewage farm due to experiments to see what possibilities; daily flow 3 million gallons, can dispose of only 2 [2.3]

1916 12 06

Cam Sailing Club annual meeting – 16 12 06b

1918 01 23

Record Floods,—As a result of the heavy fall of snow on the evening of January 15-16, Cambridge was visited during the weekend by such high floods as have not been known for many years. With the melting of the snow the Rivers Cam and Granta assumed a very muddy and turbulent appearance, and the water gradually increased in volume until in places it overflowed its banks and inundated many of the low-lying lands in the district. Since Sunday morning, however, when the floods were at their height, the waters have subsided with remarkable rapidity.—Great havoc and distress was caused by flooding to houses situate in Mill Lane, Sawston, the houses being under water some four or five deep from Saturday midday until Monday morning. The deepest flood for 15 or 20 years was experienced at Ickleton on Saturday. The river began to overflow on Friday afternoon, so that several meadows were under water, but by early Saturday morning the meadows between Ickleton and Chesterford were inundated. The people in Mill Street had a very unpleasant experience, as the street was flooded from one end to the other to the depth of several feet. Most of the people had to keep in their houses, and in some cases the basements of the houses had about six or more inches of water . . . If the river had been banked up along the meadow at the bottom of the street much inconvenience would have been saved

1918 08 07

The effluent from the Corporation sewage discharge pipe, just below Baitsbite most impure, even containing crude sewage, which badly pollutes the river and the effluvia from which is most obnoxious 18 08 07 CIPof

1918 08 17

Sewage in the River, — At a meeting of the Conservators of the Cam, the following extract was read from a report of the Surveyor " The effluent from the Corporation sewage discharge pipe, just below Baitsbite Lock has of late been most impure, at times even containing crude sewage, which badly pollutes the river and the effluvia from which is most obnoxious." It was agreed that the matter be communicated to the Town Clerk, with the request that the Corporation would furnish their remarks upon it at an early date. The following resolution was also passed, on the motion of the President of Queens': "That in the opinion of the Conservators it is desirable that the effluent should be examined by an expert from time to time on their behalf."

1918 10 23

Drainage district for watershed of rivers Cam and Ouse needed – Beds and Hunts would improve their streams which would cause flooding here – 18 10 23e

1919 03 12

First ladies 'eight' on Cam – Newnham college; photos – 19 03 12c

1918 08 06

Sewage in Cam; reports says pollution in river near sewage farm. More land needed for filter beds. German labour had been asked for; hope that profits from growing crops will pay for disposal of sewage – 19 08 06e

1919 02 26

Serious Floods.—Not for many years has the County of Cambridge been visited by floods of such magnitude or of so serious a nature as those experienced within the last ten days. Thousands of acres are under water, and at Cambridge the water rose at one time to within six inches of the height reached by the memorable flood of 1879. At Ely the river touched a depth beyond any previously attained within the memory of the oldest inhabitants. It is good news to hear that since Sunday the water has been steadily falling. A serious break in the river bank midway between Waterbeach and Upware last Wednesday resulted in the disastrous flooding of hundreds of acres of low-lying land in the vicinity, the temporary isolation of several farms and cottages and considerable damage to stacks. On Tuesday night ... above the banks at Waterbeach Fen where the break in the river bank occurred, and farmers took prompt steps to remove their stock to safety, but on Wednesday morning a break occurred, and the breach rapidly becoming wider, the water poured through. Farm buildings and cottages were surrounded, and the Inhabitants in some cases were forced to seek shelter in the village. All Wednesday farm workers and other helpers from Waterbeach and district worked up to their knees in water, but the gap widened, and it was found necessary to sink two barges in the breach. Thousands of sandbags were requisitioned and by this means the hole was filled and the inflow of water at this spot checked. Men have been employed night and day in "cradging" along the banks and strengthening the places where any water was found overflowing, this also being done on the Stretham bank of the Old West

1920

1920 04 09

Chesterton councillors want new bridges across the Cam

1920 08 11

Cam Sailing Club unveil tablet war dead – photos – 20 08 11a

1920 09 01

Competitions Revived. The revival of the annual competitions between the University and College Servants of Oxford and Cambridge promises to be of exceptional interest this week. There has been no trial of conclusions for eight years, and now that the inter-Varsity College Servants sports have been re-arranged the scope of the events has been extended in such a manner that the older members of the College Servants' Club may take their share in the competitions instead of figuring merely as supporters. Principal interest will centre, of course, in the eight-oared race between the representatives of Cambridge College Servants and those of Oxford. The recent Cambridge Town Bumping Races demonstrated the fact that College Servants 1, who are head of the River, are in a class by themselves. The crew left Cambridge yesterday (Tuesday) by the 7.37. They were accompanied by Mr. E. C. Steam, President of the Boat Club, and during the afternoon they did a little work on the river. The race will be rowed this (Wednesday) afternoon, and a dinner will be held at Oxford this evening.

1920 09 22

Sixty years on the Cam – memories of rowing, detailed article – 20 09 22, a-b

1920 10 06

Waters of Cam drawn to allow repairs Baitsbite Locks, temporary bridge at Horse Grind ferry – two ferries across river – 20 10 06b

1920 11 19

Reconstruction of bridge over Old West River at Stretham – Road Board would contribute two-thirds and County council one third of cost when the bridge was built and when the Cambs County Council build their bridge over the Cam. For that the Government would contribute 2/3rds and County one-third. But at present money was not to be obtained and little could be done. A number of landowners and farmers had offered to contribute. Dangerous condition of the ferry bridge between Stretham and Chittering. Was very narrow and in dangerous condition.

1920 12 13

Cam frozen over, 27 degrees of frost, bathers break ice

1921 06 08

Conservators know that condition of Jesus Lock was danger, if gave way would empty river ; decide to repair even though this will exhaust their funds – 21 06 08b

1921 06 29

Conservators' farewell survey- probably last official survey; dined at Clayhithe – photo – 21 06 29b

1921 11 16

River Cam Conservancy – application for new Act of Parliament – 21 11 16b

1923 10

Steam dredger on Cam [1.3]

1925 11 18

The 100ft high chimney stack which has stood for close on 300 years on the site of the old disused flour mill at the corner of Mill Lane and Granta Place, Cambridge, was pulled down. A platform was erected at the base of the stack which rises from the now dry river bed, and fuel in the form of straw, wood and corn was placed thereon. The whole was then soaked with paraffin oil, a match applied and the work of destruction begun. But the old giant took a deal of shifting and it was not until the flames had licked about his feet for over a quarter of an

hour did he sway and crash to the ground amid a deafening crescendo of falling masonry 25
11 18

1926 02 06

The clerk of the Conservators of the River Cam read a letter from the bank with regard to their debt. The overdraft was £3,842, in addition to which there was a loan of £4,000. The value of the Conservators securities appeared to be about £1,500. It may be better to ask the Corporation to lend them the money

1927 04 09

Cambridge councillors debated whether part of the King's and Bishop's Mill site should be sold to the University to erect new lecture rooms. The Corporation should not sell its property in this way; it should do so on the public market. They might get a higher offer from a firm who would like to put up a Woolworth building but they wanted an appropriate end to the Backs & such improvements would give an almost Venetian effect to the whole of the Backs river. To consider turning the site into a recreation ground with railings and white paint would be most regrettable. They should pull down the remains of the mill so that everyone could see what the site looked like when the fag-end of the foundations was up. It would expose some quite ugly buildings which would not be hidden by any plans before them 27 04 09

1927 07 10.

The Conservators of the River Cam considered a scheme to make the river navigable for cargo boats up to the Quayside near Magdalene Bridge. Mr Banham had recently bought a vessel for conveying cargo and at present it can only come as far as Jesus Lock. There had been no traffic for years and the state of the river was very bad. There was a possibility that the river could be dredged but the Commons Committee had taken a lot of trouble to make Jesus Green a beauty spot and would not sanction the deposit being placed on the Common.

1928 07 20

Cambridge councillors recommended Robinson Crusoe Island should be cleared of dilapidated buildings and overgrown trees. Two rustic footbridges should be thrown across the stream and the island let for use either as a tea garden or for boatsheds. The place was in a deplorable condition and if something were not done there would be no Island to discuss. The surface was low and if the river were at the ordinary level it would be under water. It should be turned into a beauty spot rather than the dirt spot it was at the moment. 28 07 20

1928 07 28

Members of the Cambridge Drawing Society made a strong plea for the preservation of the character of the King's Mill site, protesting against the Council's scheme for the demolition of the old Mill-race and the erection of a weir. They are thankful that proposals for a tea garden and rustic bridge were not passed but feel its unique character will be utterly destroyed. The two King's and Bishop's Mills were amongst the oldest things in Cambridge, and a monument of romance. A cascade was all very well for Bedford or Tooting but was out of keeping with the spirit of Cambridge. 28 07 28

1928 08 02

Sir – the north end of Robinson Crusoe's island, Coe Fen, is occupied as a boatyard, the oldest centre for boating for the Freshers' river and a very charming spot. The southern end is occupied by the old ferryman's cottage and his garden, now derelict, but there are still standing upon it a large dilapidated greenhouse, a poultry yard, now deserted, and a neglected summer-house with a privet hedge. There are a dozen fruit trees, now dying because their feet are in the water, and a number of rose bushes. The neglect of the garden is due to a subsidence which allowed the river to flood it and turn it into a marsh. The cottage, before the iron bridge was built, was a licensed house and those who liked to refresh themselves with a glass of beer were ferried across the river free of charge – C.F. Clay 04 08 02

1929 01 26

A young Cambridge lady in attempting to make a short cut across Midsummer Common to the towing path became embedded in the half-frozen silt and mud thrown up by the dredger. Another lady went to her assistance and suffered a similar fate. Their frantic signals soon attracted the attention of passers-by; two or three young men waded out to them while others formed a human chain. The would-be rescuer was extricated with little difficulty but the first lady became more deeply embedded. Eventually a ladder was procured and a rescue effected. Fortunately no bones were broken but she was so badly shaken up by her ordeal that she had to be removed on a hastily-improvised stretcher 29 01 26

1929 01 28

For the first time since 1895 there was skating on the River Cam. A thick sheet of ice powered with white snow, stretched unbroken from Silver Street to the electric light works. It was too inviting to be resisted and several skating parties took advantage of it. Many undergraduates took to the ice in front of King's College and at Quayside a man was seen cycling on the slippery surface. However the ice bore and he neither came off nor went in. At Silver Street it was possible to cross to the mill on the ice but below Jesus Lock, where the dredges is at work, the ice was broken up by the flow and black pools and crevices had appeared in the thin surface.

1929 03 09

Sir – I have watched the progress of H.M.S. Dredger at present operating off the footbridge, Chesterton Road, Cambridge. Some months ago they dredged one half of the lower river in the vicinity of Jesus Locks and deposited the sludge on the Chesterton side in the river; later the dredged the river above the locks and deposited the sludge in the actual place previously dredged - 'One of the financing party' 29 03 09

1929 12 13

Cambridge council agreed that the site of Grantchester Mill should be purchased by the corporation, they will offer £1,000. The house was formerly tenanted by Mr Nutter and carried with it the water rights and control of the river right through. This was of extreme importance to the town but what would they do with the meadow and the banks of the river? The bridge was built by Merton College for the use of the mill and might be a liability as it had never been taken over by Chesterton RDC or the County Council. CDN 13.12.1929

1930

1930 03

New sluice gates Mill Pool [2.7]

1930 04 28

The railway came to Cambridge in 1845 and was carried onwards to Ely by a trestle bridge; this was replaced by a low girder bridge until April 1930 when crowds descended to witness its replacement by a much larger and stronger bridge. The operation was a spectacular one, commencing at midnight engineers worked in the light of white acetylene flames to cut the steelwork in the centre of the old bridge and remove the track at either end. It was then raised on hydraulic jacks before being removed. Then the new bridge which had already been erected alongside was carefully moved into place, the lines reconnected and all was ready for trains to run again. 30 04 28 [2.1]

1930 07 22

Cambridge councillors rejected plans for the erection of a bungalow on Robinson Crusoe Island & decided the existing old cottage and shed should be demolished and that the Surveyor should report on the erection of suitable sheds for boating purposes. They also

considered land at Town Close, Old Chesterton which is occupied by numerous caravans; their appearance is most objectionable and they should be moved 30 07 22c

1933 07 15

River Cam dredging lower river complete, since July 1923, enough silt removed to cover Parkers Piece to depth 6'10", 30 years till next clearance necessary [2.2]

1933 01 11

The Cam Conservators heard that dredging operations had been carried out from Clayhithe to Baitsbite. There were still 700 lineal yards to complete, which meant about 20 weeks work but then they would not have to do any more dredging for up to 20 years. They ought to advertise the sale of the dredger so it could be seen at work. The men working the machine appealed for an increase in wages but this hardly opportune as it would only be used for a few more months. 33 01 11

1933 07 15

The Cam Conservators have recently completed the dredging of the lower river. Since the dredger commenced operations in July 1923, enough silt has been removed to cover Parker's Piece to a depth of six feet 10 inches. It will probably be 30 years before another clearance of this nature will be necessary 33 07 15

1933 10 05

Since the dredger commenced work on the Cam from Clayhithe Bridge to Baitsbite Lock it had removed enough mud to cover Parker's Piece to the depth of six feet ten inches. Now it has been sold. Weeds had also been cut and removed. Conservators agreed to continue with the full staff of men until they had got the banks into reasonable condition, and their wages increased to 38 shilling (£1.90) a week. 33 10 05

1934 05 07

Dredging the Cam – 34 05 07

1935 01 02

The little hamlet of Upware consists of only about 12 scattered houses on the bank of the River Cam and does not justify the expense of laying a considerable length of water main. People are able to obtain water from the river which could be purified where necessary for drinking purposes by filters provided by the householders themselves, a report states. In November the no.2 pump at the Ashley, Cheveley and Wood Ditton waterworks failed, then whilst it was under repair the other one broke when a wood splinter became wedged under the valve of the pump bucket. 35 01 02a

1936 02 15

River Cam Internal Drainage Board opposed Sawston – 36 02 15c

1936 05 26

Sir – May I appeal to persons not to throw into the river metal containers, such as petrol cans, which float about. The cans do not much matter to sail or power boats but might upset a skiff or even a pair. To cast dead dogs and cats into the Cam is a filthy and barbarous practice. I cannot think all the dead animals – five counted yesterday – died by 'misadventure'. Surely unwanted or sick pets would be better disposed of by use of the places where these things are attended to – Navigator 36 05 26

1938 02 11

When the lake at Madingley Hall was netted the result was not just a matter of kettles of fish but bins full. The ever-growing number of anglers makes such demands on the available fish that annual re-stocking is essential so the Ouse and Cam Fishery Board relies on a number of

owners of private lakes who have given permission for some of their fish to be transferred to other waters. The lake at Longstowe Hall has also yielded a large number – once the haul was so heavy that the net broke. Anglers no longer regard fish as something to kill; at one time it was common to see fish left to die on the river bank. Now they are returned at the end of the day 38 02 11b

1938 03 04

Albert E. Tebbitt formerly of Milton and farmer of 400 acres at Wentworth was British amateur skating champion 1895-1905; won the cup outright, also winning Duddleston Cup and Cameron Cup twice. In 1895 skated dead heat with H.A. Palmer over 37.5 miles on the Cam. 38 03 04d

1938 04 20

'Desperate measures' are needed to save part of Queens' College where the river wall of the Essex block is in a severe state. It is absolutely necessary to deposit a bank against the wall to avert a disaster and when made temporarily safe the foundations will have to be underpinned, the Cam Conservators heard. There was concern that Silver Street Bridge might also be slightly under-mined and it should be rebuilt when money was available. 38 04 20a

1938 12 10

Queens' College have commenced a Chancery Court action against Cambridge Corporation seeking to prevent them from diverting the Cam at the sluice near the former King's and Bishop's mill so as to undermine the college buildings in Silver Street and seeking £5.150 damages for damage already caused. The Town Clerk has been instructed to protect the Corporation's interest and take any action advised by their counsel 38 12 10

1939 02 02

Throughout the night 300 men patrolled between 3-400 miles of the banks of the Ouse, Cam and Lark. The patrols, equipped with field telephones, are part of the extensive flood prevention scheme organised following the floods of two years ago. News of the gradual decrease in the water level has brought relief to scores of families who had abandoned their houses. A number have returned by boat to Barway and Soham and set about restoring order out of the chaos created by the water. 39 02 02b

1939 06 08

It would be utterly misleading to talk about great enthusiasm for the beginning of the May Races. One aged riverside dweller said "I've been living here for 54 years, and there never has been much doing on the Wednesday". There certainly was not last night and the Cam came through the ordeal with a relatively calm and placid face. If there were not a great many townsfolk, there were the usual bands of almost rabid collegiate supporters who galloped, pedalled and ran with the crews, sounding like the I.R.A. at work. 39 06 08a

1939 06 09

Clayhithe's New Bridge. The new bridge over the River Cam at Clayhithe, which has superseded the old toll bridge, was formally opened on Wednesday by Ald W. Clark Jackson, the Chairman of the Cambridgeshire County Council Roads and Bridges Committee. The first vehicle which crossed over the bridge after the opening was a pony and trap driven by Aid. Francis.

1939 10 23

Mr J.A. Scudamore, the boat builder, has died aged 52. He built several motor launches when they were first introduced on the Cam and had considerable success in the races promoted by the Motor Boat Club of which he was an early member. In the summer months he was a well-known and genial figure in Mill Lane, being in charge of the new Granta boat houses which he'd helped to plan. 39 10 23

1939 11 13

Baitsbite Lock in very bad state, to repair in reinforced concrete 14 11 13

1940

1940 03 29

Versatile Sportsman. — Cambridge has lost one of its most versatile and best liked sportsmen by the death, which occurred on Monday in a nursing home, of Mr. Harry Coulson. He was 74 years of age and his home was at 16, Grantchester Road. The late Mr. Coulson was a native of Cambridge and in his early days was a baker and confectioner in Magdalene Street, and played for the Cassandra and Victoria Cricket Clubs. He went to Cheltenham College as a coach and after, two years there was coach at Bedford Grammar School for six years. He returned to Cambridge on being appointed groundsman at King's and Clare, a position he held for some 30 years. When he was appointed to the position the ground was on the site of the new University Library in Burrell's Walk, and during the time the ground was occupied by the 1st Eastern General Hospital, Mr. and Mrs. Coulson rendered valuable service by catering for the nurses. The present King's and Clare ground at Barton Road was laid out by Mr. Coulson. In his younger days he won fame as a cricketer when playing for Cambridgeshire. In a fortnight in 1909 he performed two remarkable bowling feats. Against Herts., at Hitchin, he took eight wickets for 13 runs, and then, at Newmarket, against Norfolk, he took eight wickets for only five runs. In commemoration of this accomplishment he was presented with a rose bowl. Mr. Coulson had many other sporting interests. He could make 80 and 90 breaks at billiards; he won the championship of the Cam; he skated in the amateur championship, and won trophies on the running track. He also used to breed poultry, and twice won championship cups at the Crystal Palace. Mr. and Mrs. Coulson celebrated their golden wedding in November, 1933. There are six daughters, all married.

1940 04 19

Eeling at Bottisham Locks. — In a recent issue (March 22), writes Watchman, reference was made to a possible revival of a once important Fenland industry, namely eel fishing. A correspondent, who, about 70 years ago was born and reared within a mile of Bottisham Locks, once a famous place on the Cam for eels, is reminded of some interesting happenings and of an eel pie business there. About a century ago, the keeper of the locks was old William Robinson, who lived in a little cottage opposite the sluice gates with his wife and daughter. And he was one of the most famous eelers of his time, working not only on the Cam, but also along the lode that runs from Bottisham to the locks on the main stream. He rarely used an eel fork or spear for catching eels, preferring the "eel-set" (snare) or eel-buck (trap), a kind of wicker tunnel closed at one end. The old lock keeper caught more eels than he could comfortably dispose of alive, and this led to the making of two-penny eel pies by his wife and daughter. On certain evenings the old fellow would go into Waterbeach village and at the Sun, Rose and Crown, Dog and Duck, Travellers' Rest, and other taverns marketed his wares. The fame of Robinson's eel pies, reached Cambridge, but before a branch business or "round" could be established in the town, the famous old eel catcher died and the business came to an end. According to my correspondent, who often discussed the eel trade with other eelers at the locks, the female eel is "very tasty, very sweet" and far better than the male of the species, the male being smaller and tougher than the female. CIPof 19 Apr 1940

1940 06 07

R.A.F. Man's Rescue.—A Royal Air Force man, Cpl. R. A. Laxton, effected a river rescue at Cambridge on Sunday afternoon. Seeing a man in the water, near the Fen Causeway Bridge, he dived in from the bank and brought him to safety. It is understood that the man, Mr. P. C. Phillips, of Milton Road (Cambridge), had fallen into the water from a punt.

1940 08 09

River Rescue. — Two men, one of them a non-swimmer, were rescued from the Cam by an Army officer when their canoe overturned near Jesus College boat-house on Sunday afternoon. They were Harold Hinchliffe of 24, St. Catherine Street, and Wm. Prythetich of "Ellstan", Linton Road, Hadstock. The officer, who was in another canoe, picked them up and took them to the bank. They were both taken to hospital in an ambulance, but were allowed to go home after treatment. —Another week-end river rescue took place on Monday afternoon, when a four-year-old girl, Josephine Salmon, of 86 Suez Road, Cambridge, fell into the river while playing on the footpath near Victoria Avenue Bridge. She was pulled out by a man who is at present unknown. Hot cocoa was given, to her at a nearby house, and she was then taken home wrapped in blankets.

1940 12 06 c

River Rescue. — Writing from 66, Hills Avenue, (Cambridge), Mr Thomas C. Catlin states: "Will you allow me space in your valuable paper to express my sincere thanks and gratefulness to the gentleman who on Monday night dived into the river Cam in the fog and darkness, near Chesterton, and rescued my son from drowning? It was a very gallant and heroic action on such a night. I would also like to thank the girls, who, returning home from work, went back to fetch help, and therefore helped to save the boy's life. Although still suffering from shock, he is recovering again."

1941 09 05

Fish Floating on Cam. — There has been serious mortality of fish in the River Cam below Cambridge, extending at least as far as Bottisham Locks. Large numbers of dead fish have been seen on the surface and on the river bed. Among those taken from the river were a trout of 21lb. and some fine specimens of roach, bream, rudd and pike. The mortality appears to have commenced towards the end of last week, and many anglers were disappointed to find fishing out of the question on Sunday. We understand that the Ouse and Cam Fishery Board have made investigations and the matter is under consideration

1942 03 23

Frank Evans, Fitzroy Street tailor & outfitter & Cam Sailing Club supporter, dies – 42 03 23

1942 05 22

Drowned in the Cam,—A young soldier from an anti-aircraft, unit was drowned in the Cam during the course of exercises on Wednesday afternoon. The deceased was Lance Bombardier Jack Harpin, whose home was at Heckmondwyke, Yorkshire, The accident occurred near a bridge, and other soldiers, as well as members of college boat crews, who were training nearby, dived several times before the body was recovered. Artificial respiration was tried, but without success

1943 02 19

Sturgeon caught In the Cam - Mayor Newton, of Cambridge, tells in a diary, under the date of June 11, 1680, of a fine sturgeon being caught in the Cam (says Watchman). Here is the entry condensed and in modern English: "At the back of Alderman Dickinson's house in Cambridge next to the causeway between Small Bridges and Newnham, against Felmonger's Pits, was taken in a casting net, by a fisherman named Coward, a sturgeon near two yards long measured by my Japan cane. I saw it measured, and it was very near two lengths of my cane, which, with its ivory handle, is Bear a yard long. The waters were then pretty high, and the place where the fish was caught about four feet deep."

1944 09 01

Sunday School Teacher for 59 Years.—This year, owing to deafness, Mr. F. Burton, of Chittering, relinquished the office of superintendent and teacher after 59 years' loyal service in the Baptist Sunday School there. Nine years ago, Mr. Burton received the Diploma of Honour from the N.S.S.U. for 50 years' service, and was hoping to complete sixty. When Mr.

Burton was 15 the-late Mr. Mark Wyatt, who was the Pastor of Chittering Baptist Church, along with the teachers, persuaded him to take a small class of infants. When 17 Mr. Burton was baptised in the River Cam by the Rev. Frank Thompson, late of Hove, and ever since has made it his life's work to teach in the Sunday School.

1946 12 13

Baits Bite Lock plan for Nissen hut tea-garden rejected – 46 12 13

1947 03 14

Cambridge has been hit today by some of the worst flooding for 30 years. The rapidly rising and flowing river has invaded riverside homes, Midsummer Common and other open spaces are flooded, there have been fears for the safety of Silver Street Bridge, and there is no sign of any diminution of the abnormal flow. There is an unconfirmed report that the Byron's Pool sluice has broken, and Grantchester Meadows and the "Backs" are completely under water. Silver Street was closed to all traffic during the morning. There were fears that the rush of water would seriously affect the foundations of the bridge. Street lighting was switched on in Linton when residents of houses in Meadow Lane and Chapel Terrace made a hurried evacuation of their waterlogged homes. The water rose to well over knee-deep but was subsiding this morning. At Sawston the sub-power station was marooned and electricity was cut off this morning. The Great North Road beyond Brampton is under water and the A.A. scout at Brampton cross roads was "up to his knees" at his post this morning 47 03 14

1947 10 04

Suggestion that Byron's Pool be given to Borough by Pemberton [1.1]

1948 07 15

The River Cam Conservators considered a request from the Eastern Electricity Board to run cables under the river from Magdalene College to Thompson's Lane. The Board propose to cover the cables with bags of cement in order to protect them from punt poles. Mr Burrows informed the meeting that dredging of the river was proceeding most satisfactorily. Following the meeting the Conservators set off for Bottisham Locks on board the "Viscountess Bury", but had barely left Jesus Lock when it became stuck in a sandbank

1948 11 02

Pollution of the river Cam above Baitsbite Lock which resulted in thousands of fish dying was described at a meeting of the Federation of Anglers as "appalling and dreadful". Mr C. Baxter stated that on Wednesday evening the lock was "absolutely clogged" with fish of every conceivable type, not dead, but on top of the water, gasping.

1949 02 04

River widening has been carried out by dredging operations by Silver Street Bridge, Cambridge. The dredging, which attracted much interest whilst in progress, was undertaken so that flood water coming through the sluice gates from the upper river can pass around the loop of the river at a reduced velocity and so lessen the possibility of damaging the buildings situated on the river bank. Further alterations are to be made to the sluice gates during the year to assist in de-energising the water passing through them c49 02 04 [2.3]

1949 07 28

Cambridgeshire federation of anglers were told there were thousands of fish in distress in the River Cam near Jesus Green footbridge on July 15th. The lock keeper opened the locks to let them through. Unfortunately a lot of the fish were dead, but there was no doubt that thousands were saved. Many big fish were taken in nets by men and placed in water downstream. Many dead fish had since been seen further downstream and Major Gordon Fowler said there were dead fish "as far as the eye can see"

1949 11 22

People passing over Magdalene Bridge this morning were surprised to see the usual colour of the River Cam had changed to a bright green. The discoloration extended from the bridge along the Backs of the colleges and beyond. It will be recalled that following a discoloration of the Cam last year – not then green – a public meeting of protest was called by the Federation of Anglers.

1950

1950 03 16

bank collapse Riverside near Gas Works; previously collapsed 30 years ago; wall Strange's boat house to Stourbridge common built in those years, all had piles [2.4]

1950 06 02

River Cam polluted by discharge from firm at Bourn, tons of dead fish float downstream [1.9,1.10,1.11,1.12,1.14]

1953 02 14

High water levels on the River Cam have now dropped considerably at all points except at Bottisham Locks and all precautions for dealing with any emergency during the period of the Spring tides have been completed. A tide warning system will be put into operation; the number of patrols will be increased and emergency gangs, transport and materials made available at short notice. Coastal weather and tidal conditions are received by teleprinter at the Great Ouse River Board's Ely headquarters and police are ready to issue any necessary warnings

1954 08 18

Tunnelling Coldham's Lane railway embankment for flood relief scheme [2.5]

1954 10 28

Parts of the river Cam were frozen over this morning after a night of extremely cold conditions. The maximum temperature yesterday was 31 degrees F. but last night it dropped to 18 degrees. The severe weather had caused all previous output records to be broken at the Cambridge Gas Works.

1955 02 17

Complaints of flooding in the Hauxton Mill to Shelford area have been investigated and the River Cam will be dredged to eliminate the risk of summer flooding. No such scheme for improvement has previously ever been undertaken by the Great Ouse Catchment Board. The proposed by-pass at Barton Mills would involve a dual-carriageway bridge directly over the lock gate and reduce the length of the lock by 25 feet. But there was no active navigation on this part of the River Lark and a combined bridge and sluice structure could be built.

1955 05 09

The annual punting race between the Oxford University Charon Club and Cambridge Damper Club is a relay with the lady member of the team acting as baton and hastily jumping from punt to punt at the end of each 'leg'. For the eight gentlemen on each side it was a perspiring afternoon; both wind, water and pole were playful and both of the 'batons' nearly suffered a ducking. Gradually it developed into a cross between a water-polo match and a life-saving exhibition. 55 05 09a

1956 04 26

Since the Cambridge sewage purification works at Milton Road were first built, over 60 years ago, treatment has consisted of settlement in tanks followed by passing the sewage to land areas from which is drained into the river. Now new extensions are being built, all sewage

will be properly purified and land treatment will be ended for ever. At a later stage gas driven off during the drying process will be burnt to drive electricity generators for the works and for a new pumping station at Cheddars Lane. 56 04 26a

1956 09 14

Further pollution to Cam from Duxford chemical works [1.16]

1956 07 20

Samples of water taken from the River Ouse at Huntingdon after many fish were killed on the Newton stretch of the river contained traces of cyanide. It came from the normal effluent discharge from Huntingdon Council's septic tank at Hartford. No other sources of pollution were found and the only chemical spraying was using a non-toxic weed killer. It was important that the district pollution prevention officer should be on the telephone, but the Post Office did not have the necessary equipment. 56 07 20b

1957 02 21

A new shelter has appeared on the towpath near the Pike and Eel. From the beautifully executed Latin inscription it is clear it has been built in memory of the late Roy Meldrum who devoted his considerable rowing knowledge and coaching skill to Lady Margaret and the Cambridge University Boat Club. This simple, dignified tribute will do a service to all who love the river, especially those who coach on the exposed banks of the Cam 57 02 21

1959 01 08

Flood patrols are out as part of Walnut Tree Avenue is still under water, Banham's boathouses are surrounded and Pye's Bridge difficult to get to owing to the swirling water at the base. Many parts of the bathing sheds on Sheep's Green have so much water in them that it rushed out of the doors leading to the Common taking with it bottles, waste paper basked and broken wood from the fences. The men working on the new Silver Street Bridge are still carrying on though the pedestrian footbridge is now closed as the water is up to the footboards and is considered dangerous. 59 01 08

1960s The Cambridgeshire Collection has detailed newspaper cuttings files on this topic from this date

1960 08 25

Consider warning bathers re pollution of Cam [3.1]

1960 06 08

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother opened Angel Court, the new extension to Trinity College built to ease the student accommodation problem. She travelled by normal passenger train and was fifteen minutes early arriving at the college where she showed interest in some of the ancient pottery discovered during excavation work. Later a crowd of several thousand people gave her a rousing send-off as her special launch left the forecourt of the Pike and Eel at Chesterton to take her to watch the May Races on the River Cam 60 06 08 & a

1960 11 23

The threat of flooding has hung over Cambridge for as long as people can remember. Some residents regularly take up their carpets and pile up their furniture when they go away on summer holiday in case a storm should occur. When this does occur premises, yards and gardens are left with a deposit of sewage and filth. This should not be tolerated, the City Surveyor told councillors. In Abbey Road the old six-foot high brick sewer has collapsed and been replaced by a pipe only two feet in diameter. A five-year improvement scheme incorporating a new sewage pumping station would cost £1.5 million. 60 11 23

1960 12 02

£1.3M sewage improvement scheme approved, 4½ miles new pipes Fen Causeway - Halingway; new sewage pumping station combat threats foul flooding & many residents in constant fear of flooding in storms, take up carpets & pile furniture when go on holiday; basis present sewers 1890s [3.10,3.11,3.12]

1961 03 14

Dozens of people were thrown into the fast flowing River Cam on Saturday afternoon when the ferry at Fen Ditton suddenly sank. Undergraduates who were watching the Lent Bumps plunged into the water to help the men, women and children who were striking out for the bank. Several were taken into nearby public houses where medical students assisted them and two people went to Addenbrooke's Hospital suffering from shock 61 03 06 Inquiry – 61 03 10d

1961 06 07

The ferry across the River Cam at Fen Ditton has been removed for the rest of the current boating season by its owners, Whitbread's Brewery, in the interest of public safety. A few weeks ago, at the end of the University Lent bumping races, the chain operated ferry sank throwing more than 30 people into the water. Known to University students as the 'Red Grind' because of its bright colouring it has been part of the Cambridge river scene for many years 61 06 07

1961 07 01

Permission to build a temporary Bailey Bridge over the River Cam at Chesterton has been refused. The Minister appreciates the council's desire to reduce the amount of cross river traffic using the Victoria Avenue – Victoria Bridge route but it would attract additional vehicles through narrow and tortuous roads. Proposals to restrict the bridge to local traffic and impose weight restrictions to prevent its use by heavy lorries would not work, he says. Now the Council will proceed with plans for a new permanent bridge 61 07 01

1961 10 05

The River Cam Conservators will approach Whitbread's to try and bring back the ferry that connected the grounds of 'The Plough' at Fen Ditton with the opposite river bank. After the ferry overturned last March, throwing many people into the water, the brewery considered erecting safety barriers on the bank but then decided to remove the boat altogether. It was later taken to Ely 61 10 05c

1961 11 09

"A very slight risk" to bathers due pollution [3.2]

1962 01 11

Concern pollution effluent gas works [3.4]

1962 01 25

Gas Board to pay cost of decontaminating River Cam after oil from the Gas works polluted the river – 62 01 25

1962 02 21

Sir – one of the loveliest spots on the River Granta is being destroyed. I refer to the woods on the upper river aptly called 'Paradise' During the war the hedge that gave shelter from the wind all the way to Grantchester was taken away along with a number of fine young walnut trees. Byron's Pool has lost all its former beauty and is an eyesore, filled up with tree branches and mud so that swimming is dangerous. Up to 1945 the water was crystal clear and drinkable. Now it has become a dirty, muddy stream, polluted and unfit for bathing – B.G. Cash. 62 02 21

1962 03 02

Six barges, each 60 feet long, were towed down the River Cam from Ely to the Pike and Eel landing stage at Chesterton, where lorries were waiting to collect them. The 10-ton barges had been hired from a Hampshire firm and were used during the Ely sugar beet campaign. But the cranes needed to hoist them out of the river were too large to go on the Ely landing stage so the barges were brought to the nearest suitable spot. A police escort was provided through Cambridge streets for the lorries with their lengthy loads. 62 03 02c

1962 03 27

Robinson Crusoe Island, the strip of grassland in the River Cam between Fen Causeway Bridge and the Mill Pool, is to be developed as a beauty spot. Scudamore's boat building company will plant flower beds and lay lawns; old tree stumps will be uprooted and an old boat store pulled down. It will probably be used as a stopping-off point for people punting or rowing to Grantchester. Extensive works are also being carried out to the river bank along the frontage of the Garden House Hotel as part of a gardens improvement scheme 62 03 27a

1962 12 05

The fog which came down over the Cambridge area was blown here from London by a twelve-knot wind, says meteorologists. London, having its first clear day since Monday was like an oasis surrounded by a slowly-clearing fog belt though mainline trains were still meeting long delays and London Airport was closed. The number of sudden deaths in the capital has now reached 106. Conditions were still grim in East Anglia with temperatures remaining well below zero and part of the River Cam froze between Pye's Bridge and Garret Hostel Lane. 62 12 05 & 07

1963 01 03

People travelling to work were delayed after three buses were put out of action with frozen fuel pipes. Sunshine encouraged many skaters on the River Cam along the Backs where ice is two-inches thick but the Met Office warns there is no sign of a break in the very cold weather. Snow and ice has brought outside work on building sites to a standstill though many firms are keeping on men to help with snow clearing. Demand for coal has shot up as have the number of telephone calls with people ringing up to say they are suffering from the acute weather conditions – 63 01 03

1963 01 15

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1963 02 01

Simpers rope works in New Street was established 200 years ago to meet the demand for tow-ropes for horse-drawn barges which plied along the Cam. They were made by hand on the Ropewalk which once marked the borough boundary. Today, with the coming of machinery, they are among the biggest rope and fibre merchants in the country making canvas covers for lorries, marquees, tents & flags. Since the war tremendous development has taken place in the agricultural ironmongery department where farmers can find cattle-troughs, shovels or forks and builders buy barrows, water-proof clothing and nuts. 63 02 01a

1963 03 29

The City of Cambridge Rowing Club was founded on April 20 1863. 'Town' rowing had flourished in the 1840s with half-a-dozen clubs capable of manning an eight apiece . But by the mid 50's it was mainly confined to gig-pairs and four-oared activity. At times no local crew owned even a rudder string and depended on College Boat Clubs for the loan of equipment. In 1953 the club organised the first open regatta to be held on the Cam for over 50 years and in 1961 the Leys School decided to add rowing to their athletic activities, a centenary dinner heard. 63 03 29c

1963 07 24

Princess Margaret and the Earl of Snowdon came to Cambridge to watch television cameras and electronic equipment being made at the Pye factory, St Andrews Road. A small industrial closed circuit television camera was trained on them when Lord Snowdon asked to have a go. The Princess then focussed it on a group of press photographers. A great burst of cheering went up when Lord Snowdon went over to attractive Mrs Jean Keeble who was working on a television assembly line. "I was absolutely thrilled", she said. Later they took a voyage on the Cam on Viscountess Bury 63 07 24 & a

1963 08 12

A centuries-old tradition was revived at Ashwell when the springs, the source of the Cam, were blessed. It used to be observed every year when villagers relied on the water for an income, selling the watercress growing in the shallow springs. The Vicar led a procession of choir and congregation from the church, singing the Litany. Villagers, particularly children, lined the streets to watch them go by while others peered out of windows. "We have done something out of the ordinary and it was worthwhile", Rev Catterick said. 63 08 12

1963 12 27

Cam freezes [3.3]

1964 06 19

River Cam memories from the 1920s – feature – 64 06 19b

1964 08 01

Borehole at Melbourn could have serious effect on Cam, turning it into open sewer – fear – 64 08 01b

1964 08 17

'Focus on Cambridge' is a new documentary film seen through the eyes of two tourists as they drift along the Cam in a punt. Made by Norman Mason-Smith of Forgeron Films it is intended for people lecturing on Cambridge or tourists wishing to take home a memento of their visit. It was filmed in Technicolor, lasts 16 minutes and is available in 16mm format for £22 10s. Cambridge City Libraries have agreed to take a copy 64 08 17

1964 09 24

Cambridge Water & Lee Valley Water Company sink boreholes at Melbourn to ensure water supply, fear might dry up source of Cam at Ashwell – 64 09 24c

1965 01 19

Floating restaurant planned for Cam – 65 01 19

1965 06 24

Fish & Duck on junction Cam and Old West has been restored by Sidney Wicks – feature – 65 06 24b, c

1965 09 02

River Ouse & Cam locks & lock-keepers, Bottisham & Brownhill – 65 09 02

1966 09 23

Great Ouse River Authority open new HQ at Gt Ouse House, Clarendon Road; will be shortage of water; formed in 1920 to take over work Bedford Level Corporation – 66 09 23a

1967 08 03

Pollution paradox: is it better to save hundreds of thousands of pounds and have a few dead fish or save the fish and spend the money? 67 08 03

1968 08 29

Riverside pumping station opened [29.8.2.5]

1969 06 19

Gelignite used to blast away one of four brick piers which carried the old Cambridge to Bedford railway line over the Cam at Trumpington – 69 06 19

1970

1970 06 02

Public works committee members cross Cam on ferry at inspection Elizabeth Bridge – photo – 70 06 02

1971 12 30

Pollution outside Cambridge caused by low oxygen levels [3.6]

1971 07 06

Queens' College apply for new footbridge over Cam between Mathematical Bridge and King's; would allow access to proposed new building- 71 07 06

1971 10 12

Cambridgeshire Collection exhibition on River Cam in Guildhall, Mike Petty and G.R. Wilson – 71 10 12

1971 12 30

Pollution outside Cambridge caused by low oxygen levels [3.6]

1972

Cost £500,000 bring effluent up to GORA standards [3.16]

1973 06 18

Waterbeach may get a £150,000 by-pass instead of just a new minor road into the village - because of Cambridge's traffic problems. If the plans are accepted the by-pass will link the main Cambridge-Ely road near the Slap-Up junction with the Clayhithe Bridge over the River Cam. The mile-long by-pass would replace the short stretch of road originally planned to link the A10 with the centre of Waterbeach. The County Surveyor said that the by-pass was now being recommended because of the large volume of traffic using the Fen Ditton - Waterbeach road as a short-cut to the Eastern side of Cambridge to avoid the congested city streets

1973 06 27

Discharge of raw sewage from pumping station kills fish [3.8]

1973 08 18

Mini "bombers" are terrorising tourists on the River Cam. Mr Bell of Scudamore's boatyards, Mill Lane, Cambridge, said "A lot of people who cannot swim go out on the river. It seems nothing is going to be done till somebody is seriously injured or drowned". He said

youngsters were playing "bombing" games, jumping in at the iron bridge and diving boards near the swimming pool and landing as close to the boats as possible. He understands that youngsters involved are in the seven to 11 age group

1974 06 27

Discharge of raw sewage from pumping station kills fish [3.8]

1974 07 12

River Cam "in filthy condition" [3.8]

1975 04 02

Swimmers ill after swimming Cam [3.9]

1975 06 11

The River Cam is not only so polluted as to be a bather's health hazard, but in recent years has had to be artificially aerated to keep fish alive, an Anglian Water Authority spokesman has confirmed. He spoke of children who suffered "diarrhoea and tummy upsets" after accidentally falling into the river in the Clayhithe area, and of skin divers who were ill after a sponsored Cam swim. He agreed that via Milton Road sewage works some 8 million gallons of effluent were going into the Cam daily 75 06 11

1975 06 14

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1976 03 04

Oil pollution, Bin Brook dammed, traced to Churchill College, March [3.11]

1976 05 02

The River Cam is so polluted at Waterbeach that people who fall in it suffer from skin trouble and are sick if they swallow any of the water, claimed Coun Hilda Hatley. She said that a special anti-algae paint had been stripped off the bottom of a boat by the water. Councillors agreed the problem was the severely over-loaded Cambridge sewage works.

1976 06 22

The annual swim through Cambridge, organised by the Granta swimming club, has had to be cancelled for the first time in about 40 years because of the low level of water in the river Cam. Because of possible pollution problems they dare not risk the health hazards involved but hope to put the event on again next year. Typically 70-75 women and about 80 men would enter the event

1976 07 17

Giant oil slicks choked the River Cam following failures in the city's drainage system at the height of last night's storm. Oil poured into the already heavily polluted river as interceptor tanks were overwhelmed by the sudden surge of water and workmen erected booms at points where drains entered the river. It appears the oil could have come from the Garlic Row area and may have resulted from oil which has collected in the drains during the spell of hot dry weather

1976 12 18

The River Cam is being downgraded from its present status as a top-class river because of its deteriorating condition, mainly due to sewage and oil pollution. Downgrading would be a

black mark against the Anglian Water Authority. More money will have to be spent on sewage treatment. Its Scientific Director said there had been an improvement during the past year, but low flow had aggravated the situation.

1977 06 16

Annual swim through Cambridge cancelled due pollution [3.14]

1977 07 29

There are those who say that swimming in the Cam is only marginally less dangerous than going for a dip in an oceanful of sharks. There are others who swim in the river day in, day out and are the very model of health. The two sides met at the annual visit of the City councillors to the slowly decaying bathing huts on Sheep's Green. The Mayor said: "We're told the Cam is polluted. All we can say is: Swim, drink it and kill yourselves. Only don't say you weren't warned" 77 07 29

1977 11 08

Conservators criticised over filthy disgusting River Cam [3.15]

1977 11 23

River Cam Users Committee formed [3.16]

1978 05 23

Baitsbite Lock most expensive in Kingdom through which take boat [3.17]

1978 06 13

£3.7M improvement sewage treatment works completed after 2 years work, able cope 160,000 people, higher standard of effluent [3.18]

1978 01 02

Bin Brook spills over flooding houses in Gough Way, channel to divert flood water considered 1980 [5]

1978 06 27

David Patrick, paddled down the River Cam in a boat which is thought to be the last of its kind afloat on the river. He bought the Princess Jane when she was used as just a floating platform for an overhaul of Ely High Bridge. It was pock-marked by rust, her steam engines were removed and she was without a wheelhouse. Now he has restored the paddle tug to its former glory. But sadly when the new steam engines are fitted the boat will need deep moorings, of which there are few along the river.

1978 06 30

The cost of providing a complete flood protection scheme for the Newnham and Riverside areas of Cambridge would be 'totally out of proportion to the benefits, however desirable', councillors have been told. Flooding occurred for two days on the Gough Way housing estate when the Bin Brook overflowed during heavy rain and the River Cam overflowed its banks at Riverside during the same period. But the emergencies arose from exceptionally heavy and intense rainfall for which it is not reasonable to provide capacity within the sewers, water courses or main rivers and relatively few residential properties were actually flooded

1978 09 30

Cambridge sewage treatment works have been accused of turning the River Cam into one of the dirtiest, smelliest and most turgid stretches of water in the country. Now the works have been transformed into Anglian Water Authority's pride and joy – almost. It has been their top priority project but has generated fierce controversy with an eighteen-month sewage embargo prompting sharp criticism from local councils anxious to go ahead with development plans.

At present the works cope for a population of 120,000, and there is scope for 165,000. But the river itself is already near the top of the Department of the Environment classification for chemical pollution.

1979 12 07

Mass of floating oil sets Cam on fire [3.19]

1980

1980 01 02

Plans to build a channel to divert flood water from Bin Brook 80 01 02

1980 06 30

Sea Cadets have discovered a hoard of sunken treasure worth thousands of pounds in the River Cam. Their boat's engine failed and it was found that a fur wrap had fouled the propeller. Whilst attempting to free it they discovered parts of a suitcase containing silver cups, candelabra and boxes of jewels. Police put a guard on the river until divers could carry out a full search. It is thought to be the proceeds of a major crime and is now locked away at Cambridge police station 80 06 30b

1981 01 29

The best thing than can happen to anybody who falls in the River Cam is to drown; the alternative is to catch all kinds of horrible diseases, a councillor said. Everything goes into the river, which is one big drain. They would like it to be made safe for bathing but it was impossible to stop chemicals and fertilisers being washed in and would mean higher water rates. 81 01 29

1981 02 18

thousands of fish die after storm brings pollution, restocking take more than 10 years; blamed on AWA as Riverside pumping works unable to cope, raw sewage flowed into river at height of storm, 93% total fish stock killed [4.1]

1981 07 15

It is likely to take more than 10 years to restock a polluted stretch of the River Cam in which hundreds of thousands of fish died. Anglers say that fishing in the city has now been entirely wiped out. Around four tons have been removed from the river near Bait's Bite lock but many are still floating. It is feared that as well as causing a smell, the rotting fish could cause further pollution. It is suspected that raw sewage was washed into the river during heavy rain. 81 07 15a

1981 10 01

Riverside sewage works unable to cope, raw sewage flowed into river at height of storm, 45% total fish stock killed 81 10 01

1982 02 18

Oil pollution - 4th serious incident in 18 months [4.2]

1984 04 21

Wick Alsop, president of the Cambridge '99 Rowing Club, laid the foundation stone of their new boathouse on the banks of the River Cam. It will replace one of two destroyed in a spectacular fire last September. The other boathouse was owned by the Cambridgeshire Rowing Association. Work on the £134,000 building started in February, is scheduled to be completed by August and will include a ground floor weights room and a gym on the first floor 84 04 21 p8

1985 05 07

Councillors considered proposals for a floating restaurant and waterbus on the River Cam. Two electrically-powered boats would run from Jesus Green through the Backs. One would be used as a quality restaurant and the other provide visitors with a running commentary in various languages. But they would destroy the beauty and serenity of the river; it is not a commercial waterway and there is already a lot of disturbance from punts. 85 05 07a

1985 06 10

Car floating on Cam after May Ball – 85 06 10

1985 11 01

The Nancy was a fine steam tug, one of the largest to be used on the River Cam. She was about 70 feet long with a capacity of about 70 tons and was owned by the Eastern Counties' Navigation Company carrying coal, bricks and timber. The boat was laid up in 1914 because of the war and rotted at her moorings near the railway bridge at Ely until the river was widened in 1947. Then the rusting boat was buried on the Babylon marina site. Four years ago the remains were unearthed and now the stern has been given a permanent home at the Cambridge Museum of Technology in Cheddar Lane 85 11 01

1985 11 02

People of Little Shelford and Harston have spent £3,000 to repair a magnificent obelisk which presides over open fields near Harston. However the man it commemorates appears to have left no mark in history. Gregory Wale died in 1739. He was a Justice of the Peace, Deputy Lieutenant, county treasurer and Conservator of the River Cam. The memorial says he lived an advocate for liberty, was an agreeable companion, faithful friend and a useful member of society. But it remains a mystery why such a splendid monument should be erected to so unremarkable a man 85 11 02

1986 06 18

A K-registered Ford Escort was found dangling from Clare College Bridge. The vehicle came from a scrapyards but it remains a mystery how it got there. One theory is that it was brought down the Cam on punts then hoisted up and lashed into place with ropes and chains. The jolly jape brought laughter from river users but now the college is faced with removing it. They are seeking advice from King's who last year removed a Fiat that was 'parked' in the middle of the river on stilts 86 06 18c

1987 01 10

One of Cambridge's top hotels, the Garden House, is planning a £3 million expansion. Luxury apartments and 16 hotel rooms are proposed as well as a sophisticated leisure complex including swimming pool, sauna, gymnasium and health-food snack bar. Penthouse suites will be built along the River Cam front. The 117-room hotel has to compete with the Post House at Impington and the Moat House at Bar Hill while a new hotel is planned for Downing Street 87 01 10b

1987 01 13

The AA were inundated by calls to motorists stranded in the snow and hundreds more were caught without anti-freeze as overnight temperatures plunged to -11C. The River Cam was iced up for the first time in five years and skaters were out in force on the flooded fen at Earith in perfect conditions of ice, sun and no wind. Many were practicing for the Fen Ice Skating Championships but for others it was pure pleasure. 87 01 13

1987 11 16

Garden House Hotel's expansion plans include a glass-walled swimming and leisure centre with pool, squash court, saunas and solaria. There would be an extension housing 16 bedrooms, each of which would have a balcony, together with six two-bedroom apartments

with kitchens, designed for longer-stay residents such as senior managers or academics. These will run along the east bank of the River Cam and be screened by trees. In addition there will be bed-sitters for staff and a two-storey car park. This would complete the hotel's business plan. But there have been criticism from preservationists. 87 11 16a

1987 11 26

A new pumping station at Upware, commissioned by Swaffham Internal Drainage Board, replaces an old diesel system dating back to 1929. Consulting engineer, Keith Stacey, says it was constructed in seven months by their own direct labour and they are pleased with the result. The new station has the capacity to pump 178 tons of water per minute into the River Cam from 12,000 acres of adjacent fenland. 87 11 26

1989 08 24

Jesus Lock was designed by William Chadwell Mylne who advised the Cam Conservators in 1829 that the river to Clayhithe should be deepened and the number of locks reduced from four to two. The University feared that moving the lock from its old site at the Fort St George would not prevent flooding, so the famous engineer Thomas Telford was called in for advice. There has been concern that it might be replaced but now John Taylor of Coldham's Lane has helped obtain a preservation order to ensure its survival 89 08 24

